



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Application Number: 2301971
Council File Number: CF# 306510
Applicant Name: Toby Ressler, representative for Seattle Parks Department
Address of Proposal: 2801 SW Thistle Street

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Master Use Permit to establish use for future construction, alteration and addition to existing institution ("Southwest Community Center"). The project includes an addition of 10, 500 sq. ft. to an existing 27,227 sq. ft. community center and includes a new gym, entry lobby, new toilets and family changing room. Renovation consists of 2,600 sq. ft. of existing lower level to become expanded teen room. Parking for 73 vehicles will be accommodated on site and by joint-use agreement with Seattle Schools on adjacent property. A determination of Non-significance and environmental documents were prepared by the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation.

The following approvals are required:

Council Land Use Action to allow additional lot coverage. (maximum allowed, 35%; proposed 46.6 %) (SMC 23.44.010C)

Council Land Use Action to allow additional height for a structure in a single-family zone (maximum allowed, 30 feet; proposed 34 feet) (SMC 23.44.012A)

Council Land Use Action to allow a rear yard less than 25 feet in depth (proposed 15 feet) (SMC 23.44.014B)

Council Land Use Action to allow waiver of dispersion between institutions (required 600 feet; proposed, no dispersion from adjacent Denny Middle School, 225 feet from Chief Sealth High School (SMC 23.

SEPA - Environmental Determination (SMC Chapter 25.05)

SEPA DETERMINATION:

☐ Exempt ☐ DNS ☐ MDNS* ☐ EIS

☒ DNS with conditions

☐ DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition
or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

*A Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance (MDNS) was issued by Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation on May 27, 2003. DPD will consider and impose any necessary SEPA conditioning.

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The existing 27,227 sq. ft. community center/swimming pool, constructed in 1974, is located adjacent to the Sealth High/Denny Middle School Playfield and between SW Thistle Street and the playfield. Denny Middle School, with approximately 850 students, is located immediately to the west of the site. Students from the middle school and from Chief Sealth High School, to the north and east, across SW Thistle Street currently utilize some of the community center facilities during school hours.

The site is located in Single Family 7200 zone (SF7200). The surrounding area includes, primarily SF7200 zoning to the west, Commercial One (C1-40) zoning to the southeast, Lowrise 1 (L1) zoning directly east and SF5000 zoning to the northeast. Accessory uses include accessory parking and athletic fields with spectator seating.

Two blocks to the south, along SW Trenton Street and directly south of the sports fields is Westwood Village, a regional shopping center.



Topographically, the immediate area that includes the proposal site is stepped into three relatively flat areas. The Denny Middle School instructional buildings are located to the northwest of the site at a grade approximately 25 feet higher than the community center which lies to the east. Playing fields and spectator seating are located to the east and south portions of the site and at an elevation 25 feet lower than the community center and 50 feet lower than the school buildings. This stepped topography continues to the east several blocks before sloping back up towards an area of single family zoning that overlooks the fields. Some steep slope areas are located primarily at the periphery of the athletic fields and are not part of a larger, naturally occurring steep slope system.

The actual proposal site is 1.15 acres of property deeded from the Seattle School District to the Parks Department at the time of the original community center construction (1974) plus an additional 12,148 sq. ft. of property to be acquired for the community center in a land swap between the School District and Parks which was the result of recent negotiations between the parties. The additional 12,148 square feet will be added to the existing parcel with the filing of a Lot Boundary Adjustment (DPD approved MUP# 2400082).

Project Description

The Parks Department proposes to add a gym, showers, toilets, storage and ADA family changing room to the existing community center constructed in 1974. The attached gym would be located to the south of the existing community center.

Public Comment

No written comments regarding the project were received during the public comment period, which ended on October 1, 2003.

ANALYSIS—LAND USE DECISION

Analysis – Council Waiver or Modification of Development Standards for City Facilities

Evaluation of Proposal Based On Criteria and Policies

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation wishes to add to the existing Southwest Community Center (SWCC) a gymnasium, a new entryway, and gym-support spaces (bathrooms, family changing room) within a two-story volume between the existing swimming pool and the new gym addition. Within the lower floor of the existing center, 2,600 square feet of existing space will be renovated to provide for an expanded teen center.

The Community Center would continue to serve its intended target population, the students of Denny Middle School and Chief Sealth High School and the broader surrounding community. Attendance counts for 2001 indicate an average of 412 people per day participated in programs on weekdays, with an average of 201 on weekends (Saturdays only, since the Center is closed on Sundays).

The Southwest Community Center is located in a Single Family 7200 zone. Development standards for single-family zones anticipate conventional single-family structures on conventional parcels of land. The development standards of the zone require front, rear and side yards. Height is limited to 30 feet; lot coverage limits are established at 35 percent of lot coverage. Institutions, including community centers, are permitted as conditional uses in single-family zones. They are subject to the development standards of the zone for uses permitted outright with some modification of standards as allowed in SMC 23.44.022.

Although significantly larger than the minimum lot size required for the zone (7200 square feet), even the size of the parcel expanded through the approved Lot Boundary Adjustment (62,436 square feet) is a comparatively small one for a public community center with swimming pool, gymnasium, other programmable areas, outdoor play area and surface parking. It is for situations like this that section 23.76.064 of the Seattle Municipal Code includes provisions for the City Council to waive or modify applicable development standards, accessory use requirements, special use requirements or conditional use criteria for City facilities. The City Council may waive or modify applicable development standards or administrative conditional use criteria according to the provisions of Chapter 23.76, the Seattle Municipal Code, Subchapter III, Council Land Use Decisions, with City facilities considered as Type V legislative decisions.

The proposed addition to the existing Community Center was designed under direct Parks Department direction, by an accomplished architectural firm, with direction received at three meetings of the Design Commission. The proposed design requires the waiver or modification of the Single Family development standards outlined in the chart below in order to be accomplished.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD	CODE REQUIRED	PROPOSED
Height/Setbacks	Structures generally allowed to maximum of 30', Gym allowed 35', with set back provisions. SMC 23.44.012, SMC 23.45.022	Gym more than 30' but less than 35'; with less than 20' set backs on west and south side.
Yards	Rear Yard at 20 % of depth of lot or 25', whichever is less. SMC 23.44.014B	Rear yard proposed at 10'
Dispersion Between Institutions	600' SMC 23.44.022E	None from adjacent, Denny Middle School; less than 600' from Chief Sealth HS.
Lot Coverage	Maximum coverage, 35% of lot area. SMC 23.44.010C	Lot coverage at 46.6%.

Additional Height

While the gym portion of the new addition does not exceed the 35-foot maximum height allowed for institutional gyms as permitted through the administrative conditional use process in single-family zones, it does exceed the 30-foot height limit of the zone. The actual gym height reaches 34 feet at its tallest. The non-gym portions do not exceed the 30-foot maximum height limit of the zone. Height, bulk and scale issues are effectively mitigated given the context, siting and design elements incorporated into the proposed addition.

Given its proximity to Denny Middle School and the surrounding large public school shared sports complex, the constellation into which its own orbit is cast, the community center's height, bulk and scale are proportionate with respect to both the current and potential future context.

The proposed new addition to the existing Southwest Community Center will be at the rear of structure and away from SW Thistle Street, further muting the way it presents itself to its neighbors along the

street. As viewed from the street, it does not directly affect or impact the potential or existing development pattern of the block.

The south façade of the proposed gym structure is approximately 72 feet in length. To reduce the appearance of bulk, there is a vertical glass and metal panel in the area of the exit doors, separating two sections of masonry wall. There are continuous plant materials along the length of the façade.

The west façade of the proposed gym is approximately 98 feet in length. The existing site topography slopes uphill to the west, resulting in a ten-foot reduction of the gym elevation height along this side. Rainwater downspouts and masonry control joints occurring along the entire length of this façade help to break down the scale of the structure.

The east façade of the proposed gym is approximately 72 feet in length. A 5,000 square-foot play area with climbing equipment and supplemental landscaping materials and a fence, under concurrent design by the parks department, will effectively provide scale and reduce the appearance of bulk along this façade.

Yards

The gym addition maintains a ten foot side yard on the west side which is the relationship of the existing structure to the school property to the west. The addition will maintain a fifteen foot rear yard which, given the adjacency of parking lot and athletic fields, is sufficient not to significantly increase any impacts associated with the addition to adjacent lots zoned residential but developed with a public middle school and a Seattle Public Schools' complex of playing fields. Given the site-specific circumstance of location adjacent the sports complex parking lot, DPD would recommend waiver of the rear yard standard, for land use purposes only, if even less than ten feet.

Dispersion

The dispersion criteria for new or expanding institution, other than child care centers locating in legally established institutions, shall under normal conditions be located six hundred feet (600') or more from any lot line of any other institution in a residential zone (see SMC 23.44.022E).

The lot lines of this institution are immediately adjacent Denny Middle School to the west and a Seattle Schools District sports field facility (the Denny/Sealth Athletic Complex) immediately to the east and south. Chief Sealth High School lies north and east of the community center approximately 225 feet in distance. The SWCC is located on property deeded by and leased from the Seattle School District. It was established at this location, in part, to service the students from these institutions. The existing centrifugal clustering of high school, middle school, playfields and community center follows a pattern that runs counter to the centripetal ideal and policy expressed in the current Land Use Code. It is, however, a historical pattern which is in place in this neighborhood and which has served other neighborhoods in the city well. Although non-conforming with regards the dispersion criterion, the SWCC sits to the north and west of the Denny-Sealth Athletic complex, a large outdoor sports facility covering six square blocks serving both schools. The complex is ringed by city streets and creates a significant separation from neighboring residential properties. The existing SWCC is set back twenty feet from SW Thistle Street and separated from the street by significant landscaping. The center's

location within the larger open space area of the sports field complex enables in this instance the intent of the dispersion criteria to be achieved.

Lot Coverage

As is the case with many public facilities, the development standards of this Single Family zone constrain the facility in ways that hamper their fundamental purpose -- to provide a variety of services and recreational opportunities at the scale of a neighborhood or community rather than at the scale of a single family. The Seattle Parks Department seeks a Council modification of the lot coverage development standards of the Single Family Zone as it relates to the existing community center and its proposed addition. The Seattle Land Use Code sets a maximum for combined principal and accessory structures in Single Family Zones not to exceed 35 percent lot coverage (SMC 23.44.010C). The proposed expanded community center is, of necessity, a fairly large structure on a fairly small site. The proposed expansion of the Southwest Community Center was originally predicated upon a proposed land swap between Parks and the Seattle School District (SSD) which had deeded land for the original community center in 1973. The proposed land swap would have provided land sufficient for new required yards adjacent the addition and for compliance with lot-coverage requirements. In addition, the community center would have acquired sufficient new property to provide all parking required for the center on site. Currently this parking is provided both on the originally deeded land, on land leased from SSD and through a shared use agreement for parking between Parks and SSD. The proposed land swap would have added 84,760 square feet to the original lot size; the agreement negotiated only adds 12,148 square feet to the site, for a total of 62,436 square feet rather than the originally proposed 135,050 square feet. The addition adds 10,590 square feet to the existing 27,227 square foot community center. The resulting lot coverage is 46.6 percent.

That enlargement of the site has been effected through the instrument of a Lot Boundary Adjustment (LBA) approved by DPD (MUP # 2400082). The total site area resulting from the LBA, when filed, will be 62,436 square feet (as opposed to the originally proposed 135,050 square feet).

DPD recommends approval of the above waivers of development standards, including that for allowable lot coverage, even if circumstances should preclude the filing of the Lot Boundary Adjustment prior to Council's approval of the modifications and waivers addressed in this recommendation.

Other Considerations

The community center will continue to operate, as it has in the past, in compliance with the noise ordinance. All recycling, storage and vehicular circulation area are to be contained within the property with minimal exposure of these elements to the surrounding neighborhood.

Landscaping is planned to enhance and expand useable outdoor community space and to integrate the institution with adjacent areas. A new pedestrian path will connect the Center with Denny Middle School, allowing students convenient access to the athletic fields. New outdoor spaces will include an informal community gathering space south of the new entry and grassy areas for informal gathering and recreation. A landscaped outdoor play area will be located east of the new gymnasium. A total of 12,000 square feet of asphalt paving will be eliminated by the proposal, with a 3,000 square foot net

reduction of impervious surface when the project is completed. Existing plant material will be retained with the exception of site clearing demolition required for the new addition.

No modification of parking requirements is requested. Parking required for the project will continue to be provided both on site and through a joint-use agreement on lands leased from the Seattle Public Schools. All exterior lighting will direct light downward to minimize light and glare on neighboring residential properties. There is no net gain in proposed parking, so no new parking lot lighting is being proposed.

Conclusions

In making a recommendation to Council, SMC 23.76.050 charges the Director to draft an evaluation of the proposal based on the standards and criteria for the approval sought and consistency with the applicable goals and objectives of Seattle's land use policies as referenced in SMC Chapter 23.12, the City's SEPA policies and any other applicable official City policies.

Outside of consistency with the SEPA policies, which are adequately described in the Parks Department's Mitigated Determination of Non-significance, the Land Use Code and Comprehensive Plan policies do not speak directly to issues of expanding existing community centers except to reduce the adverse impacts from incompatible land uses. In this case, the expanded community center use is both permitted and compatible with surrounding residential uses with impacts of height, bulk and scale adequately mitigated through siting and design conditions.

Recommendation-Council Approval and Modification

Population density is, and should be, greatest within the city's residential neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that support commercial, cultural and recreational services as well as providing a home to a great number of the region's households are some of the primary goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Benefits such as richly diverse recreational opportunities and increased pressure for more open space are part of the struggle to achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. As the region continues to grow, meeting the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and in a larger sense, Growth Management, means accepting intensification of uses within this city. The Southwest Community Center is already dedicated to serving students at the two nearby schools as well as being a center for the surrounding neighborhood. The proposal to add a gymnasium and to provide greater space for the teen center is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Striking a balance between intensifying the serviceable spaces and programming within the center and maintaining a physical scale and proportionality with the existing single family development within the neighborhood has been achieved in the sensitive siting and design of this proposal. Striking that same balance with modest modifications and waivers to single-family Code development standards is the central purpose of this waiver request for additional height, lot coverage, and the waiver of the dispersion criteria.

DPD finds that the modification to height, to depth of rear yard, and lot coverage standards and the waiver of the dispersion criteria are consistent with the Land Use Code policies and rationale. DPD recommends that the proposed plan for the expansion and remodel of the Southwest Community Center be approved and the requested modifications to and waivers from Code requirements as detailed above be granted.

RECOMMENDED DECISION - COUNCIL MODIFICATIONS AND WAIVER APPROVAL

It is recommended that the proposed modifications to allow 46.6 percent lot coverage, to allow the height of the gymnasium to extend to 34 feet, to allow a rear yard of only 10 feet, and the waiver of the dispersion criteria to allow an institution to be within 600 feet of another institution at this City Facility be **GRANTED.**

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS - COUNCIL MODIFICATION AND WAIVER APPROVAL

No additional conditions.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the annotated environmental checklist dated December 14, 2001 and supplemental information in the project file submitted by the applicant. The information in the checklist, the supplemental information, and the experience of the lead agency with the review of similar projects form the basis for this analysis.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665) clarifies the relationship between codes, policies, and environmental review. Specific policies for each element of the environment, and certain neighborhood plans and other policies explicitly referenced, may serve as the basis for exercising substantive SEPA authority. The Overview Policy states, in part, "Where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation" subject to some limitations. Under such limitations or circumstances (SMC 25.05.665 D) mitigation can be considered. Short-term and long-term adverse impacts are anticipated from the proposal.

Short-term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: 1) temporary soil erosion; 2) disturbance of birds (gulls, crows and migratory birds occupying site); 3) increased noise, dust and vibration from construction operations and equipment; 4) increased traffic and parking demand from construction personnel; 5) tracking of mud onto adjacent street from construction personnel; 6) intermittent conflicts with traffic adjacent to the site from construction vehicles; and 7) consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. These impacts are not considered significant because they are temporary and/or minor in scope (Section 25.05.794, SMC). Although not significant, the impacts are adverse and for that reason are addressed by City Codes and/or ordinances, and State of Washington regulations, specifically:

- Street Use Ordinance (watering streets to suppress dust, obstruction of the pedestrian right-of-way during construction, construction along the street right-of-way, and sidewalk repair)
- Building Code (construction measures in general)
- Stormwater, Drainage and Grading Code (temporary soil erosion)

Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances will be adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation. Further mitigation by imposing specific conditions is not necessary for these impacts. The Department finds, however, that certain construction-related impacts may not be adequately mitigated by existing ordinances. Further discussion is set forth below.

Noise

The proposed addition to the Southwest Community Center will require some demolition, grading, and other noise-generating construction activities. Noise associated with construction of the addition could adversely affect residential areas in the vicinity of the proposal site. In such circumstances the limitations of construction hours contained in the Noise Ordinance may be inadequate to protect the residential neighborhood. To minimize construction-related noise impacts in residential neighborhoods DPD has commissioned projects of similar scale to limit hours of construction to between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on non-holiday weekdays, and to between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. This condition has been successfully applied in the past and will be imposed here.

The Department recognizes there may be occasions when critical construction activities of an emergency nature, related to safety or traffic issues may need to be completed after regular construction hours as conditioned herein. The Department reserves the right to approve waivers of the restriction of construction hours. Such waivers should be requested only in the most extraordinary of circumstances and must be approved by DPD on a case by case basis.

It is also recognized that there are quiet construction-related activities, such as, but not limited to, site security, surveillance, monitoring for weather protection, checking tarps, walking on or around the site and structure. These types of activities are not considered construction and will not be limited by the conditions imposed on this Master Use Permit. Nor would landscaping activities involving only hand tools or painting by hand, without the use of mechanical compressors, be limited by the imposed condition. In addition, after the building is fully enclosed, on a floor-by-floor or areas-by-area basis, interior work may be done at any time in compliance with the Noise Ordinance with no pre-approval from the Department.

The Department further recognizes some special circumstances of this particular site and siting. There is a significant separation between the proposed construction activity and residential uses to the south and east; the existing structure to which the addition at the rear is to be added provides a noise shield of sorts between the construction activity and the nearest single-family residences which lie across SW Thistle Street. The greatest impact of construction-related noise will be to students and teachers of the Denny Middle School if the construction activity occurs during scheduled instructional hours of the school year. Should the Parks Department and selected contractor choose to do so, they may submit to DPD for its approval a Construction Management Plan which would propose hours of construction beyond those allowed in DPD's conditioning for the precise purpose of mitigating noise impacts during school hours while school is in session. Such a plan must include the entire remaining construction cycle for the project and would have to be approved by DPD before work outside of the restricted hours may occur. Otherwise the SEPA condition below will be in place.

Air Quality

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) regulations require control of fugitive dust to protect air quality and will require permits for removal of asbestos (if any) during demolition. Compliance with these requirements will sufficiently mitigate impacts to air quality. A condition will be included pursuant to SEPA authority under SMC 25.05.675 A to require that a PSCAA Notice of Intent be filed prior to commencing any demolition activities.

Long-term Impacts

Potential long-term impacts that may occur as a result of this project include increased bulk and scale of the building, an increase in ambient noise due to increased human play activity, and increased energy consumption. These long-term impacts are not considered significant because the impacts are minor in scope and are otherwise mitigated by project design constraints. Other long-term impacts, including traffic impacts on surrounding streets and peak parking demand require further comment and analysis.

Parking and Traffic

According to the study, “Southwest Community Center-New Gymnasium and Teen Center Parking and Transportation Analysis” by Heffron Transportation (July 22, 2002), commissioned by the Parks Department, normal operations associated with the addition to the existing Southwest Community Center is not expected to cause undue traffic through nearby residential streets nor to create any serious safety hazards. Adequate parking demand would be accommodated through the expansion of the parking area on the land acquired through the LBA and through the continuation of leases and shared parking agreements with the School District. For peak activities, such as varsity football games or large track meets at the athletic fields, excess parking may not exist and would not be available for demand generated by the new gymnasium. Since these events happen relatively infrequently, the Parks Department has proposed that an agreement be developed with the Seattle Public Schools relative to event scheduling at the Southwest Athletic Complex, Denny Middle School, Chief Sealth High School and the Southwest Community Center to avoid scheduling concurrent or overlapping events that would exacerbate traffic impacts in the area or over-tax parking availability. A copy of that agreement shall be submitted to DPD for review and approval prior to a Certificate of Occupancy being granted for the gymnasium addition. The project will be so conditioned (see Conditions-SEPA, below).

Other impacts not noted here as mitigated by codes or conditions such as increased ambient noise; minor disturbance to local and migratory birds; increased traffic and parking demand are not sufficiently adverse to warrant further mitigation by conditioning.

Summary

In conclusion, several effects on the environment would result from the proposed development. Existing codes and policies successfully address these effects on the built and natural environment. Both short term and long term impacts will be sufficiently mitigated by the limited duration of construction and the design of the project.

DECISION-SEPA

The proposal is **CONDITIONALLY APPROVED**.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS - COUNCIL CONCEPT APPROVAL

None.

CONDITIONS – SEPA

During Construction

Unless otherwise supplanted by an approved Construction Management Plan, the following condition(s) to be enforced during construction shall be posted at the site in a location on the property line that is visible and accessible to the public and to construction personnel from the street right-of-way. If more than one street abuts the site, conditions shall be posted at each street. The conditions will be affixed to placards prepared by DPD. The placards will be issued along with the building permit set of plans. The placards shall be laminated with clear plastic or other weatherproofing material and shall remain in place for the duration of construction.

1. The hours of exterior demolition and construction shall be limited to non-holiday weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Once each floor has been fully enclosed, interior construction on that floor may occur at any time in compliance with the Noise Ordinance. The Department may allow construction during the restricted times only where such work is shown to be of an emergency nature, including work necessitated by safety or street use (traffic) concerns. Prior approval must be obtained from DPD for such work.

The Department also recognizes that there are some special circumstances of this particular site and siting. There is a significant separation between the proposed construction activity and residential uses to the south and east; the existing structure to which the addition at the rear is to be added provides a noise shield of sorts between the construction activity and the nearest single-family residences which lie across SW Thistle Street. Should the Parks Department and selected contractor choose to do so, they may submit to DPD for its approval a Construction Management Plan which would propose hours of construction beyond those allowed by SEPA conditioning. Such a plan must include the entire remaining construction cycle for the project and would have to be approved by DPD before work outside of the restricted hours may occur. Otherwise the SEPA condition above will be in place.

2. A PSCAA permit shall be obtained prior to commencing demolition activities.

Signature: (signature on file) Date: June 17, 2004
Michael Dorcy, Land Use Planner
Department of Planning and Development
Land Use Services